

Historical Stories For Children (3)



HISTORICAL STORIES FOR CHILDREN 3

‘ABD AL-MALIK IBN MARWĀN

‘UBAYDULLĀH BIN ZIYĀD



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*In the Name of Allāh,
the Beneficent, the Merciful*

Our aim for the publication of these series is to introduce some aspects of biography from the history of Islam. These biographies include both types of individuals who either played a good and useful role or a bad and harmful role. We had always cherished the idea that we would be able to produce a short sketch of hard facts from the history of Islam in this field to be written exclusively to capture the interest of young children and teenagers.

We pray to the Almighty Allāh to assist us in proving our present and future efforts to be accomplished facts — thus making a useful contribution to the learning of young children and teenagers and help us in this cause. He is the Best Guide and the Best Helper.

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In the Name of Allāh

After the downfall of the hated dynasty of Abu Sufyān it was the Marwān family who came to power. The Marwān family seized control of the Muslim government which had been usurped previously by Abu Sufyān in the wars against the family of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). They then proceeded to direct the affairs of the community in the name of Islam.

Marwān, whose son ‘Abd al-Malik was noted for his ignorance and stupidity, was little suited for the responsibility of ruling. He began a conflict with a man called Zubayr and after a reign of terror, killing and plundering he extracted an oath of allegiance from him and his followers under the threat of death. Likewise among the first people to make a pact of support with him were the tribes of Jordan, but only (as they themselves admitted) for fear of being killed if they did not accept.

Marwān was known by various other names such as: 'the monkey' 'the lizard' and 'the crocodile'. This despicable evil man acquired these names because of the thin and sickly shape of his body reminded people of these animals; moreover he used to set out in search of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and when he found him stand and make ridiculous monkey-like gestures. The Prophet of God would curse him and pray that God turn him into the very creature he was aping; thus it was that he became afflicted with the shaking palsy:

without warning his whole body would suddenly begin to tremble.

There is a *hadīth* (a saying) of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), which describes Marwān's bodily organ as resembling a lizard. The noble Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has declared that the lizard is a filthy animal. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has also stated that whenever one of the Banu Umayyah family dies he changes after death into the form of a lizard or crocodile. It is for this reason that people are reminded of lizards at the mention of any of the Banu Ummayyah family.

ʿABD AL-MALIK IBN MARWĀN

After the death of Marwān, his son ʿAbd al-Malik came to power. Before taking over the affairs of government he was always to be found in the Mosque, praying or reading the Qur'an. He was so devoted in his worship that he became known as the 'Dove of the Mosque'. As soon as news reached him that he was to succeed to the caliphate, however, he closed the Qur'an and said : "Farewell, from now onwards we are to be separated from each other. Since it is now a question

of government of the Muslims, I have no need for the *dīn* of Allāh (*dīn* is the Islamic code for living which Allāh revealed to his Prophet Muhammad — s.a.w.a.) or the Qur'an." Before coming to power ‘Abd al-Malik would become angry if someone were to kill an ant but as soon as he took control of the government he spent his life killing and torturing the Muslims. Indeed no matter how many people he killed he could never satisfy his thirst for blood. In this respect he was no different from his forefathers. Even when Ḥajjāj wrote to him informing him that huge members of Muslims and Shi `ahs had been killed, it

made him no impression on his stony heart.

One day a noble asked him, "O King! I have heard that you even drink wine; is this to be expected of the caliph and ruler of the Muslims?" 'Abd al-Malik replied, "By God I swear it is true, but wine is nothing compared to the blood which I am fond of drinking". Such is the way of behaving of those who desire to rule merely by force and oppression; such people will exterminate anyone once they consider to be an obstacle in their path — even if it means killing their closest friends

or members of their own family. ‘Abd al-Malik thought only about power and by what means he could secure and retain his control over the government; he never considered the needs of the people or the country as a whole. ‘Abd al-Malik was shameless, tight-fisted and bloodthirsty and all his agents and supporters resembled him.

It was ‘Abd al-Malik who appointed the following men, all famous for their vicious and despicable behaviour to the various posts within the Muslims lands :

1) Hajjāj, who was the most blood-thirsty

criminal of that time. He was ruler over lands stretching over present day Iran and Iraq. His name has become proverbial for ferocity and brutality.

- 2) Muhallab, who was the most baseless and shameless governor in the history of the people of Khurāsān (in eastern Iran).**
- 3) Hishām, the son of Ismā‘il, who was the governor of Medina.**
- 4) Abdullāh, who was ‘Abd al-Malik's own son. He was appointed to serve in the government in Egypt.**

- 5) Musā ibn Naṣīr who was the governor of Maghrib (the present day Morocco).**
- 6) Muhammad, son of Yusuf ath-Thaqafi and brother of Ḥajjāj who lived in Yemen.**
- 7) Muhammad ibn Marwān who ruled in the Arabian peninsula.**

All these ministers or representatives of ‘Abd al-Malik were corrupt and tyrannical.

‘Abd al-Malik became famous by the name Abu Dhubāb (the father of the flies). It is said that his mouth emitted

such a foul stench that flies passing anyway near his face would perish because of the intensity of the smell. He was also notorious under the name **Rashaḥ al-Ḥajar**, indicating that he was excessively miserly. (It was the same ‘Abd al-Malik who initiated the minting of dirhams and dīnārs with specifically Islamic designs; upto that time Roman coins had been the normal currency.)

‘Abd al-Malik was perhaps the first so-called Islamic ruler to deliberately try to do away with the divine injunction "command others to do good deeds and

forbid them from doing bad deeds" (*al-amr bi 'l-ma'ruf wan-nahy 'ani 'l-munkar*). He did not allow trained teachers to teach the people about the *din* of Islam, moreover he did not allow anyone to talk publicly about the reality of this world and the next. Despite this anti-Islamic activity, he nevertheless decided to change his political position with regard to the family of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and the sons of Ali (a.s.). With this in mind he wrote to his governor Ḥajjāj that he should stop harassing the progeny of the Prophet. The reason for this change was that he had seen with his

own eyes how, soon after Abu Sufyān's family had bloodied their hands in the slaughter of Ali's sons, their government weakened and they lost political power. From this it is obvious that ‘Abd al-Malik changed his mind about killing the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the other leaders of the Muslims, not because he feared God but for fear of losing his position as King. After twenty-one years of dictatorial rule he died.



‘UBAYDULLĀH, SON OF ZIYĀD

Ziyād, the father of ‘Ubaydullāh is commonly attributed with various fathers as his debauched mother was known to have committed adultery with many men; there-fore, he is known by various names such as:-

- Ziyād, son of his father;**
- Ziyād, son of his mother;**
- Ziyād, son of ‘Ubayd;**
- Ziyād, son of Sumayyah.**

His name has become linked to Mu‘āwiyah for the same reason; indeed he is also known as the son of Abu Sufyān as it is believed his mother also slept with the latter. We can see from these and other examples that all the men who opposed the Prophet (s. a. w. a.) and his Shī‘ahs had immoral parents or grand-parents. Four persons, in particular who became notorious for their opposition to Ali (a.s.) and his progeny, were illegitimate. The four, noted for their treachery, cunning and evil were Mu‘āwiyah, ‘Amr bin Ziyād and al-Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah.

It was Ziyād who had the Shī'ahs of Ali (a.s.) and other Muslim leaders captured and put them to death. Before killing them he would have his victims' arms and legs cut off and would blind them by thrusting a hot iron into their eyes. Ziyād, through hypocritical cunning, managed to worm his way into the Shī'ah ranks and get to know the most important among them. After this despicable treachery he would order his men to take them prisoners and subject them to torture.

Ziyād was the first to employ bitter

aloes (a plant used in small quantities for medicinal purposes) to poison the Shi`ahs of Ali (a.s.) and it was he who began the practice of burying his victims alive. It was Ziyād, too who encouraged the people to curse and slander Ali (a.s.).

‘Ubaydullāh's mother (Marjānah) was notorious for her immorality.

THE WAR BETWEEN TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD

During the early period of ‘Abd al-

Malik's rule the Shī'ahs of Kufah rose up in revolt, determined to avenge the bloody death of Ḥusayn ibn Ali (a.s.). They chose five of the bravest and most militant from among them as leaders and started out towards Shām (Syria) to try and destroy 'Ubaydullāh ibn Ziyād who was one of 'Abd al-Malik's rivals. 'Ubaydullāh also went out to meet them at the head of a thirty-thousand strong army of his henchmen and torturers. A fierce battle ensued between the forces of Truth and Falsehood and after terrible slaughter on both sides, the Shī'ahs, unable to withstand the sheer size of the enemy

army, were defeated. It was ‘Ubaydullāh who planned the killing of Imām Ḥusayn and his supporters.

It was not long however before Mukhtār ath-Thaqafi rose up to avenge the death of Imām Ḥusayn (a.s.). He defeated the armies of ‘Ubaydullāh and killed large numbers of the enemy. ‘Ubaydullāh, the brutal tyrant was put to death at the hands of Mukhtār ath-Thaqafi himself, the latter cut off the tyrant's head and brought it before Imām as-Sajjād (a.s.) (the fourth Shī‘ite Imām), who expressed satisfaction at the death of

one of the bitterest enemies of Islam.

